

February 2026

PEW ECHO

FIRST REFORMED CHURCH

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1stReformed.org

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Do You Speak Love?

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

- 1 Corinthians 13:1

Have you ever traveled to another country? If you have, then chances are you may have used this question at least once: Do you speak English? Some of you may have learned another language in school, such as Spanish, French, or German. Or you may have memories of an older relative who still spoke the language of the "old country" every now and then, especially at home. Perhaps you know someone who is fluent in multiple languages. Those who serve as translators have an important role, especially in our increasingly multi-cultural world.

When it comes to communicating in another language, here's a question you may not have heard before: Do you speak love? Yes, love has its own language, and learning to speak love can greatly improve the ways in which we give and receive love with those we love. The concept of love languages was developed many years ago by Gary Chapman, a Christian author and counselor who wanted to help people discover a biblically-based way of understanding how we are uniquely wired by God to communicate love. His book, *The Five Love Languages*, is one I would highly recommend.

Chapman identified five love languages as five distinct ways people give and receive love. They are: Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts, Acts of Service, and Physical Touch. Understanding these languages helps people communicate affection in ways that people in their lives they are closest to truly understand, strengthening connections by meeting

emotional needs through specific actions like compliments, undivided attention, thoughtful presents, helpful deeds, or appropriate physical closeness. The core idea is that everyone has a primary love language, and learning to "speak" each other's language helps both people in a relationship feel more loved and understood. This is applicable in marriage, in a dating relationship, or for parents and children. The core concept is that different people with different personalities give and receive love in different ways. By learning to recognize these preferences in yourself and in your loved ones, you can learn to identify the root of your conflicts, connect more profoundly, and truly begin to grow closer.

February is a month in which love is front and center, especially with Valentine's Day right in the middle of the month. And, the Bible is a book in which love is front and center. The Gospel is a message of salvation in which love is front and center (John 3:16, Eph. 2:4-5). The way in which God makes Himself known to us has love front and center (1 John 4:16). The way in which Jesus instructed His disciples to follow Him has love front and center (John 13:34-35). So, perhaps this is a good time for us to be asking this question: Do you speak love? And, how can we grow in giving and receiving love with those we love by growing to understanding our love language? After all, the Bible calls us to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), so let's grow in learning to speak love.

Grace and Peace in Christ,
Pastor Brad




FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Nancy Born
- 5 Ron Dommisie
- 6 Marion Herman
- 8 Mark Kappers
Shannon Veenendaal
- 9 Ben Cleveland
- 14 Joan Hoffmann
- 16 Dennis Hanke
Jean Sebald
- 20 Mary Loewen
- 21 Jared Veenendaal
- 22 Joyce Lemkuil
Steve Wagner
- 24 Andrew Houwers
- 26 Irene Schmitt
- 28 Mary Rammer

??? **Bible Quiz** ???

The New Testament uses several Greek words to describe love. Which of the following best represents the selfless, sacrificial love that God shows to humanity?



A) Eros
B) Phileo
C) Agape
D) Storge

Answer: C (See John 3:16 and 1 Corinthians 13)



FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 19 Corey and Jenny Kappers (26)



THE PARABLE OF THE LOST RING

Only three years after Paula and Joe Walter married, her wedding ring was lost as she played catch with their son. Naturally, she was heartbroken. Over the years, whenever family and friends gathered in the back yard, she urged everyone to look for the ring — but to no avail. Because the yard borders on woods, Paula feared the ring had flown into the trees, never to be seen again.

But just before the couple's 40th anniversary, landscapers hired to do work in the yard brought her a surprise: They'd found the ring — right where Paula had been playing with her child so long ago! Like the woman in Jesus' parable who finally found her lost coin (Luke 15:8-10), Paula rejoiced. God too searches until every person who has strayed or been flung away from the faith is found.

Sometimes the place we rediscover faith is right where we've looked before. What makes the difference? A different person helping us search? Light shining in a different way? We may never know. We simply rejoice — and so does God.



The Upside-Down Blessing

The Beatitudes are more than poetic lines from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. They're a radical redefinition of what it means to be blessed: The Greek word makarios doesn't just mean "happy." It describes a deep, untouchable joy that pain, loss or hardship can-

not erase. As scholar William Barclay wrote, it is "the joy which shines through tears."

Jesus flips the world's idea of success upside down. The "blessed" aren't the powerful or prosperous, but the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek and the merciful. Imagine reading them as "Congratulations, you who feel broken,

God's kingdom belongs to you!" His words assure us that, even in suffering, we stand in God's favor.

Real blessing isn't about shiny possessions or smooth sailing. It's the steady, saving presence of God — a life preserver tossed to us when we're struggling to stay afloat. And it's not just an individual promise. Jesus spoke these blessings to a community, a we more than a me. Together, as the body of Christ, we find comfort, strength and the courage to live with joy that nothing in life or death can take away.

“WHAT DO I HAVE?”

What do I have, Lord, that you would need me as a servant?

Eyes, he said,
to see the beauty in all that I’ve made —
and my children as they travel life’s highway.

Hands, he said,
to reach out and touch hurting souls,
to give a hug or encouraging pat on the back.

Feet, he said,
to lead my children through this world of strife
and to help them run from sin and follow me.

Mouth, he said,
to lift up your voice and sing praises to me
so others may hear the joy in your heart.

Ears, he said,
to listen to my still, small voice of love
and to hear my children when they cry for help.

Heart, he said,
so you may know the full love of my Spirit
and love my children as I have loved you.

No regrets!

If you’ve ever regretted a big purchase and wondered if you could return it, you’re familiar with the nagging feeling of buyer’s remorse. Thankfully, our Redeemer never experienced that. As a church sign proclaims, “When Jesus bought you, he never had buyer’s remorse. And he never will!” To Jesus, the payment of suffering and death was well worth the pay-off. “For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2, NIV).



A THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

While living in the Middle East, Bible scholar Kenneth Bailey gained new insight about Jesus’ Beatitude “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matthew 5:6, NIV).

In *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, Bailey tells of traveling with friends through the Sahara Desert when it was 110 degrees in the shade, “and there was no shade.” One of their goatskin water bags leaked empty, and after consuming their remaining water, they journeyed a day and a half intensely thirsty. Bailey’s vision blurred, and his mouth was so dry he couldn’t eat. Finally, they reached an ancient well, whose water was their salvation.

Bailey explains righteousness variously as peace, justice and right relationship with God. “As I staggered on [in the desert], my mind turned to [Matthew 5:6],” he writes, “and I knew that I had never sought righteousness with the same single-minded passion that I now gave to the quest for water.”

*You can always give without loving, but
you can never love without giving.*

USHERS FOR FEBRUARY

Gary Ten Haken
Dick Huibregtse



GREETERS FOR FEBRUARY

Feb. 1
Ning Zhang & Tong Wang

Feb. 8
Marion Herman & Sue Wisse

Feb. 15
Jim Kuplic & Marlys Van Wyk

Feb. 22
Steve & Lisa Klescewski



Present: Pastor Brad Veenendaal, Dennis Beach, Dave Stoffregen, Dick Huibregtse, Steve Wilterdink, Dave Mulder, Doug Church via call in, Ron Mueller, Corey Kappers, Ben Cleveland, Kurt Teunissen, Travis Steffen, Marty Halverson
Absent: None

First Reformed Church
Consistory Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2026 7PM

1. **Devotions:** Pastor Brad led by reading from Job 23:9-10 and 1 Peter 1:3-7. God has given us new hope with the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We will still suffer grief in our trials until he is revealed to us on earth. He also spoke of the pieces of a puzzle and how do we put them together without having the full picture. Going through storms gives us an opportunity to change our lives.
2. **Opening Prayer:** The consistory spent time in prayer, Pastor Brad closed.
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting:** There was a motion and support to approve the minutes of the previous meeting (December 9, 2025). That motion carried.
4. **Agenda additions:** None
5. **Deacons Update/Financial Report:** Corey gave an update through the end of December. We finished strong with a good month of giving in December and are currently off to a good start for January. Motion and support to approve the report. That motion carried.
6. **Elders update:** Dave provided update on the January 6th Elder's meeting.
7. **Old Business:** None
8. **New Business:** A) Looking ahead to 2026: schedules, roles, what to expect (examples: attendance at meetings, preservice prayer, greeting at the door). B) Goals and areas of emphasis: 1) Prayer – in the life of our congregation, a congregation devoted to prayer leads to a strong church. 2) By-Laws needing updating. 3) Formation of a Connections Team. (Needing facilitators to report back to consistory. Examples of outreach – church work groups, Main Street Memories, Harvest Supper, Bible studies, Farmers Market.) C) Go through items in the library and bell tower storage room. D) Nursery: will no longer be staffed on an ongoing basis until there appears to be a need. Room will still be made available.
9. **Ministry Team Updates:** Discipleship committee to have Coop meeting next week.
10. **Adjourn and closing prayer:** There was a motion and support to adjourn. That motion carried. Pastor Brad closed the meeting with prayer.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 7:00 PM

Pastor Brad Veenendaal
Dave Stoffregen (Clerk)

Dear Friends,

One of the ways that we provide advanced discipleship lessons for our church members is through **Flash Training** sessions. These "firehose" events take place when the believers can give us lots of hours over a short period of time. College semester breaks are a perfect example.

We are currently doing a Flash Training series on the book of Ephesians (pictured). We spent 2.5 hours on the introduction alone!

Please pray for the students. One of the participants is a woman who holds a doctorate in psychology. She recently came to faith in Christ and loves studying the Word.



Love,

Brian and Dana

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WRITE IT ALL DOWN

In the recent past, federal workers received a directive to submit in writing a bullet list of at least five things they accomplished on their jobs last week. The directive for workers to justify their jobs had been met with much confusion and resistance from both employees and agency heads alike. This is nothing new. As a retired federal employee, I recall many years ago being required to fill out a daily log of my accomplishments to justify my position. I was literally showing that I was putting in an honest day's work for a day's wage.

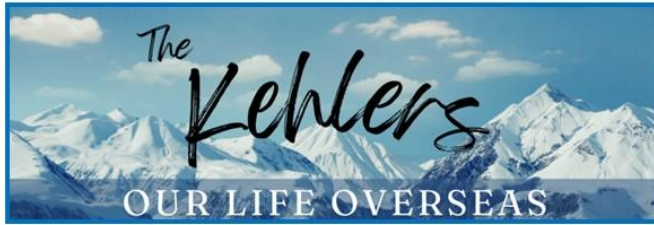
What if God required us to write down at least five bullet points of spiritual accomplishments each week? Would it be easy to submit a list filled with prayer, worship, bible study, and good works? Or would our list consist of just a few items, like sitting in church for an hour per week? Thank the Lord we don't have to write it all down!

Christianity is not a "checkbox" religion. It does not consist of bullet points we can check off and once completed go about our merry way. The written lists and ordinances of the Old Testament were nailed to the cross of Christ. (Colossians 2:14)

Lastly, there is no need for us to keep a record of our Christian accomplishments, because God is doing it for us. "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books." (Revelation 20:12) Just as federal workers must give an account of their job performance, Christians are accountable for their work in the kingdom of God. (Romans 14:12)



~ Jay Launius



Hello Partners!

We hope you all had a great Christmas! We had a nice time celebrating with friends and family in different ways and places. The girls got matching ukulele's which was probably their highlight!



We're excited to celebrate with you all! After months of paperwork and jumping through hoops, the two businesses in the village officially received their registration, and we were able to hold a formal opening. That means we can now operate in full swing! With all hands on deck—and a lot of help from our national partners—we organized everything in just one week and held the opening before Christmas.

The opening looked a little different than we had imagined, with many speeches from local leaders and government officials. Even so, we were able to speak on behalf of the businesses and truly celebrate the milestone. Around 200 people from the surrounding area attended.

Tyson captured photos throughout the event, while Hannah stayed busy serving and giving gifts—including scarves, which symbolize happiness in welcome, honor, and respect. Ainsley performed a dance with her teacher and even ended up in the news. And Addy looked adorable and thoroughly enjoyed the snacks!



We are so excited to return to the village and see what the Lord is doing—and will continue to do—in the lives of people in the area. With the registration now complete, we're able to operate in an official capacity. Our hope is to be more intentional with the relationships we're building, including developing a more focused program for the kids who regularly come to play and spend time on the property.



Please pray for the HFC office on the property. Because the registration process took much longer than expected, of the eight women who were hired over six months ago, seven are no longer able to work there due to other job opportunities or life changes. A new interview and hiring process will begin in January.

Thank you so much for your partnership and prayers. We are excited to see what God has in store for this area in 2026!



Thank you all for your continued prayers and support!

The Kehlers

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406everest@gmail.com

KID'S PAGE



?? ? Bible Quiz ? ??

The precise number varies depending on the Bible version, but roughly how many times does the word "love" occur in the Old and New Testaments combined?

- A. 200-300
- B. 400-500
- C. 600-700
- D. 800-900

Love

Answer: C

WHAT MAKES A GOOD FRIEND?

Write your top 3 answers below:

1. _____

2. _____

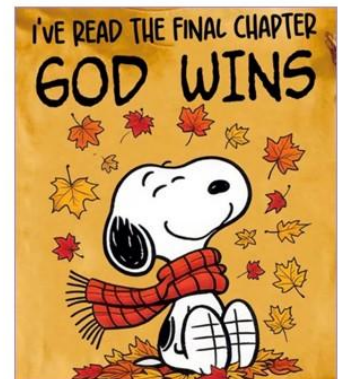
3. _____



GOD SAYS I AM



Life without Jesus is like an unsharpened pencil... It has no point



February



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:30am Worship 10:45am POW 45 / SS	2	3 1pm Dorcas Society 7pm Elders	4 1:30pm Living Bible Study 6:30pm CrossCenter 6:30 The Chosen Grp	5	6 Lake Lundgren's Weekend for Ladies	7 Lake Lundgren's Weekend for Ladies
8 9:30am Worship 10:45am POW 45 / SS Lake Lundgren's Weekend for Ladies	9 6:30pm Women's Bible Study	10 7pm Executive Committee	11 6:30pm CrossCenter	12 6:15pm Women's Bible Study	13	14
15 9:30am Worship 10:45am POW 45 / SS	16	17	18 6:30pm CrossCenter 6:30 The Chosen Grp	19	20 Youth Retreat at Silver Birch Ranch	21 Youth Retreat at Silver Birch Ranch
22 9:30am Worship 10:45am POW 45 / SS Youth Retreat at Silver Birch Ranch	23 6:30pm Women's Bible Study	24	25 6:30pm CrossCenter	26 6:15pm Women's Bible Study	27	28 

A man goes out ice fishing one morning. He reaches the ice and is about to cut a hole in it when he hears a voice from above: "There are no fish here."

The fisherman is shocked but gets up and moves to another spot. As he's about to cut a hole, he hears a voice from above again, "There are no fish here either."

He gets up and moves to a third spot. Before he's even finished walking, the voice says, "I'm telling you, there are no fish here."

The fisherman says, "God, how can you be so sure there aren't any fish here?"

The voice replies, "This is the ice rink manager."

